

NEWS RELEASE

Alabama Department of Public Safety

courtesy • service • protection since 1935

State Troopers Complete Immigration Enforcement Training *Alabama Implements Agreement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*

ANNISTON — Twenty-one Alabama state troopers were authorized Friday to enforce federal immigration law following their completion of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement training at the Center for Domestic Preparedness. The training and authorization allow the troopers — during the course of their regular duties — to question, detain and arrest an individual who is in this country unlawfully.

“Today’s graduation enhances the safety of all Alabamians by providing our state troopers with a valuable new tool to strengthen immigration enforcement,” said Gov. Bob Riley. “I congratulate these troopers and thank them for their service.”

Alabama is the second state to implement a Memorandum of Understanding with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, allowing the troopers to enforce immigration law as provided for by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1996. Florida implemented an MOU in 2002.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions, who earlier this year initiated discussions between the state and federal government to secure the agreement, called the memorandum “an important step.”

“I believe in what you’re doing,” Sessions said in a taped message to the 21 state trooper graduates. “The days when we ignored and discounted the contributions of our state and local law officers in the enforcement of immigration laws are over. As a result of this agreement we’ll also have three new federal immigration agents in the state, and together with the 21 of you, we can make a difference in the way we handle immigration enforcement.”

Attorney General Bill Pryor said the MOU “helps Alabama’s troopers better protect our state. Congress has enabled states the authority to enforce immigration law, and in exercising that authority, Alabama has strengthened the service and protection our troopers provide each day,” said Pryor.

The 21 troopers completed a five-week ICE course that included immigration law, civil rights, intercultural training, public complaint procedures, anti-racial profiling and other training designed to prepare them to properly enforce immigration law, according to Col. Mike Coppage, director of the Alabama Department of Public Safety.

Coppage said the troopers will engage in immigration enforcement actions only as needed during the course of their regular duties. “These are state troopers, not immigration agents,” he said, “and they will not take part in ‘sweep’ searches for illegal aliens.”

Coppage said troopers routinely encounter individuals who are in Alabama illegally. “Thanks to the MOU, these troopers now are authorized and trained to question, detain and arrest such individuals,” he said. Coppage said the 21 troopers also will serve as a resource for their fellow troopers, all of whom received basic training in immigration law earlier this year.

Oct. 3, 2003

for more information contact:

Public Information/Education • P.O. Box 1511 • Montgomery AL 36102-1511

(334) 242-4445 • <http://www.dps.state.al.us/>